This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

This One
04T8-0QK-S59B

Trim Size
04TB-0QK-9S9D

SISTER BEATRICE

AND

ARDIANE AND BARBE BLEUE

Sister Beatrice

and

Ardiane & Barbe Bleue

TWO PLAYS

Translated into English Verse from the Manuscript of

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

By

BERNARD MIALL

New York
Dodd, Mead and Company
1902

Copyright, 1901
By Dodd, Mead and Company
All rights reserved

Published March, 1902

UNIVERSITY PRESS . JOHN WILSON
AND SON . CAMBRIDGE . U. S. A.

SISTER BEATRICE

A MIRACLE PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE HOLY VIRGIN (in the likeness of SISTER BEATRICE)
SISTER BEATRICE
THE ABBESS
SISTER EGLANTINE
SISTER CLEMENCY
SISTER FELICITY
SISTER BALBINE
SISTER REGINA
SISTER GISELA
THE PRIEST
PRINCE BELLIDOR
LITTLE ALLETTE
Beggars, Pilgrims, &c.

TIME — *The Thirteenth Century.* PLACE — *A Convent in the neighbourhood of Louvain.*

Translator's Preface

I

"THESE two little plays," says the author, "are really librettos. Music is being written to them by M. Gilkas." The French version is in unrhymed alexandrines, if the term be permissible; that is, in unrhymed lines of twelve syllables. It is of course possible to employ this metre in English verse, but it is a medium as yet too little polished by use to refract, without theft or distortion, its immanent sense; it is, so to speak, one of your material metres, more ready to present itself in body than in spirit, being still in a primitive stage of evolution, and waiting the master-hand which shall teach it an easy delivery and self-effacement.

In short, it is a metre neither so far familiar nor so far developed as to justify its use by a translator, whose duty is to interpret his author, in some remote degree, as his author might wish, rather than to experiment as himself might please.

For myself, I had no envy to attempt it, and so, with my author's approval, I have turned his play into such blank verse as I might; holding, with him, that our English unrhymed verse of ten syllables, iambic in scheme, — trochaic, dactylic, anapæstic, catalectic, and what not by incident, — is an equivalent sufficiently near, and perhaps the most proper, of the French unrhymed verse of twelve syllables. But I do not pretend that the author's mood may not be betrayed by the staccato effect of the shorter line. To the French alexandrine, of all metres, is possible at times a "linkéd sweetness long drawn out," which by a shorter metre, or, indeed, by any metre consisting, as ours, very largely of accent, is rarely attainable.

Translator's Preface

Readers may miss in "Sister Beatrice" what they are used to call the glamour, the atmosphere, of the Maeterlinckian drama. They will miss it partly, no doubt, because I have translated it; but partly also because it is partly absent in the French; they may, perhaps, find more of it in the music, if they have the fortune to hear it. But the play unsung, unstaged,—it is, as I have said, a libretto — is the play of M. Maeterlinck's which most nearly approaches, in the matter of treatment, the avowedly obvious spirit of the English drama. That the story is all spiritual, or rather, that the spiritual in the play has a story, is no doubt the reason why the treatment may be material and articulate.

Other plays of this author might be described — he himself, I think, might so describe them — as belonging to static or potential drama: the plays were the dramas of a state of feeling. Here, I think, we have for the first time in M. Maeterlinck's theatre the treatment of a legend already crystallised: a legend in Eng-

land familiar to readers of Mr. John Davidson's poetry in "The Ballad of a Nun." It has also been treated by Miss Adelaide Anne Procter, and a singularly charming translation of the original Dutch version — for in Dutch we find it first told and first printed — may be found in the first volume of a publication called the "Pageant," issued some years ago. This version was translated by Mr. Laurence Housman and Mr. J. Simons; whether it be the oldest or the original version I am unable to say.

This to explain why "Sister Beatrice" is not most obviously by M. Maeterlinck, and by no one else.

LIDO, VENICE,
May 10, 1900.

II

In translating "Ardiane and Barbe Bleue," which, like "Sister Beatrice," was written as a libretto, I have again used the ordinary "blank verse" line to represent the unrhymed French line of twelve syllables. But in the original text of this drama there are many passages in *vers libre*, both rhymed and otherwise. To make irregular metres readable in English requires no less than inspiration, and if inspiration is not always at the service of the poet it is still less often at the beck of the translator. In such passages I have therefore preserved, so far as possible, the original measures, but have in all cases, or nearly all, retained or added rhyme.

It was not easy to decide whether I should call our familiar hero-villain Bluebeard or Barbe Bleue. As children we connect him with Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves; but if he be anything less than universal he would appear to be French. Some would relegate him merely to

the post of an accidentally baptized variety of the Myth of the Closed Chamber;[1] some identify him with a certain Marshal and Constable of France,[2] companion-in-arms to the Duke of Brittany; some say he is Henry VIII.; at all events one Gilles de Lavalle, sieur de Rais, and lord in all of some eight goodly châteaux, for the most part in Brittany, constable and marshal as aforesaid, did commit certain atrocities upon certain women and children, though his wife survived him, and he was in 1440 executed therefore, at the age of thirty-six. One popular legend has it that the brothers of seven deceased wives arrived with Saint Gildas, whereupon the castle crumbled away, and the brothers killed the marshal and

[1] See "The Forbidden Chamber:" E. Sydney Hartland, Folk-lore Journal 1885, vol. iii. Also Mr. Lang's edition of Perrault. It was from Perrault that M. Maeterlinck obtained the legend, which he has altered to suit himself.

[2] See "Un Maréchal et un Connétable de France. La Barbe Bleue de la legende et de l'histoire," in the British Museum.

constable. Whether this feudal dignitary, who in his twenties was marshal, constable, and councillor to King Charles VII., was or was not the original of the Bluebeard legend, it is certain that of the ruins of his numerous castles all are known by the latter's name, and are connected with legends of his atrocities; and in one, the castle of Chantocé, which one Thiphaine or Triphine d'Anguille gave in 1100 to the forbears of one Marie de Crain, who in marriage brought it to Gui, father of Rais, father of Barbe Bleue, or Gilles de Lavalle, may be seen to this day a long subterranean hall, communicating with another, low and square, which is entered by three staircases. Chantocé is built on a flat rock, surrounded by a moat, and was defended by two towers with drawbridges. It is interesting to note that the depravity of Gilles was attributed to the fervent study of pernicious literature in his youth.

As the story of Bluebeard pure and simple, as distinguished from that of Bluebeard Gilles,

is found in Greek, French, Tuscan, Icelandic, Esthonian, Gaelic, and Basque, it seems unlikely that Gilles was the origin of the legend. It is most likely that the Myth of the Forbidden Chamber found, as all stories will sooner or later find, an exposition in actual life; so that the real drama, in course of years and popular relation, took to itself some or all of the international Forbidden Chamber details, while the Forbidden Chamber stories were given, in many countries, a name, and in France a local habitation — or rather some eight or nine such.

The name of the victorious and final wife is variable. Often it is Anne. Sometimes she finds the corpses, sometimes the heads; the wives, who are usually seven, are sometimes her sisters and sometimes not. Sometimes her brothers kill the polygamous husband; sometimes she has no brothers, and restores the wives to life, as she does in one of the Gaelic versions. In the version of Perrault, which is probably the original of all our English versions,

she finds the bodies of the wives, and her brothers execute justice.

When I thought of retaining the French name of the hero, it was, as I say, to preserve the reader from reminiscences of the pantomime and the Arabian Nights, which somehow do not "march together" with the drama of M. Maeterlinck. I finally determined to retain "Barbe Bleue" for the name of our hero because the names of all the other characters are French, and untranslatable, and it seemed to me that the contrast of the English name of our hero would still further accentuate the illegitimate Arabian and pantomimic reminiscences that, for some of us, cling to it. Plain "Bluebeard" is hardly congruous with these other names; we have never thought of our childhood's monster as the warden of a harem of maidens out of a play by M. Maeterlinck. The point is difficult as it is nice, and also trivial, and perhaps it is best to leave the reader to give our hero the name that his individual

taste dictates. My apology is to disarm the captious.

A word as to the versification of these two translations. They are for the most part written in what is popularly called "blank verse." At the same time, besides employing the slight variations which precedence allows in such verse, I have introduced, here and there, what I conceive to be a variation especially desirable in a translation, wherein one cannot always, or often, choose one's words, and is sometimes compelled to employ a phrase that would, if handled in the ordinary way, be unmusical in the extreme. This variation consists in the employment of the well-known principle of catalexis where not to employ that principle would result in cacophony. To render certain concatenations of consonants, especially those containing sibilants, tolerable to the ear, I have allowed for the time which their pronunciation actually demands, by counting them as a syllable, so that the decasyllabic

line, though still having the time of ten syllables, has only nine syllables in it if estimated in the ordinary way. An example of such a line is: —

"In silence shed before a queen's feet."

Another example is —

"Open the fifth door." — "Not even there?"

I should not have referred to this matter had not a critic quoted one of the above lines as a proof that I was ignorant of the elementary rules of versification.

BERNARD MIALL.

LONDON, *April* 18, 1901.

Contents

	Page
Sister Beatrice	1
Ardiane and Barbe Bleue . . .	93

SISTER BEATRICE

ACT THE FIRST

A corridor, in the centre of which is the great entrance-door of the convent. To the right, the door of the chapel, to which a few steps give access, makes an angle with the wall of the corridor. In the angle so formed an image of the VIRGIN, *of the stature of an ordinary woman, stands within a niche, on a pedestal of marble, which is raised on steps and enclosed within a grille. The image is attired after the Spanish manner, in vestments of silk and precious brocades, which give it the semblance of a celestial princess. A broad girdle, wrought*

in gold, encircles the waist, and a golden fillet, on which glitter precious stones, confines, like a diadem, the tresses of woman's hair that fall about the shoulders of the image. To the left of the convent door is seen the cell of SISTER BEATRICE. *The door of the cell is ajar. The whitewashed cell is furnished with a chair, a table, and a pallet-bed. It is night. Before the* VIRGIN *a lamp is burning, and at her feet is prostrated* SISTER BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

Pity me, Lady: me about to fall
In mortal sin, for he is coming back
To-night, to-night, and I am all alone!
What must I say to him, what must I do?
He looks at me with trembling hands,
and I —
I know not what it is that he desires.
Since I came first into this holy house

Four years are nearly gone — ay, four years quite
But for six weeks, when August meets July.
Then I knew nothing: I was quite a child:
And now I still know nothing: nor I dare
Ask of the Abbess, nor to any tell
This matter that torments my heart — this woe,
Or else, this happiness. It is, they say,
Allowed to love a man in marriage: he,
When first of all I leave the convent, says,
Before he even kiss me, there shall be
A hermit, one who does miraculous things,
One that he knows, who shall unite us both.
We are told often of the lures of sin,
And of the snares of man: but him you know;
He is not like the others. Long ago,
When I was little, he would often come
Into my father's garden of a Sunday;

We played together there. Him I forgot,
But oftentimes I would remember that
When I was miserable, or in my prayers.
Pious he is and wise: his eyes are gentler
Than those of a little child that kneels to pray.
Here at your feet he knelt the other night,
Under the lamp: did you not see him there?
To look at, like your Son. Gravely he smiles,
As if he spoke to God, though but to me,
To me who cannot answer him he speaks,
Me who have no possessions. See, I tell you
All: for I seek not to deceive you; see,
I am very wretched, though for three days now
I have been unable to cry any more.
Did I refuse to listen to his prayer
He swore that he would die! And I have heard

That such a thing may happen; such as he,
Men that are beautiful, and tall, and young,
Have slain themselves because of love. One day
They spoke of this to Francis and to Paul.
If this be true I know not: but the earth
Is full of trouble, and they tell us naught.
O Mother, hear! I know not what to do!
And who knows, Mother, that these trembling hands
Held forth to your holy image shall not be
Torches unquenchable in the blaze of Hell
To-morrow?

[*There is heard without the sound of many approaching horsemen.*

Listen! Listen! Do you hear?
There are horses — many! Now they stop! Ah, now

Feet on the threshold! now they try the door!

[*A knock on the great door.*

What, what to do? Mother, I will not go
I will not, if you wish it!

[*She rises, and runs to the door.*

Bellidor?

BELLIDOR (*from without*).

Yes, open quickly, Beatrice! it is I!

BEATRICE.

Yes, yes!

[*She throws wide open the door of the convent, and* BELLIDOR, *clad in a coat of mail and a long blue cloak, is seen upon the threshold. On his right hand is a boy laden with costly garments and glittering jewels. Not far from the door is an old man, who holds two richly-appointed horses by their bridles,*

and leads them to and fro beneath a tree. In the distance, under the starry sky, a limitless moonlit country.

BEATRICE (*advancing*).

You are not alone? Who is it there,
Under the tree?

BELLIDOR.

Draw nigh, and have no fear!
[*Kneeling upon the threshold he kisses the hem of* BEATRICE'S *robe.*
O, beautiful, as you come forward so,
Beatrice! to front the stars that wait for you
As you upon the threshold trembling stand!
Surely they know a mighty happiness
Has come to birth, and, like the dust of gold
In silence shed before a queen's feet,

They are strewn over all the long blue ways
We go to travel through. What is it? Say!
What would you, what? O, do your feet already
Falter? You turn your head? O no, no, no!
My arms enlace you, hold you forever fast
In the sight of Heaven? No! you shall not fly,
For by enchaining love delivers you!
O come, come, seek no more the shadows dim
Of the lamps wherein love slumbered. Love has seen
The light he never saw before: the light
Whose every passing ray his triumph gilds,
Unites our youthful spirits, and ensures
Our destinies. O, Beatrice, Beatrice!

Behold, I see you, I am near you, touch,
Embrace you and salute you the first time!

[*At these words he abruptly rises, seizes* BEATRICE *about the body, and kisses her on the lips.*

BEATRICE (*recoiling, and feebly defending herself*).

No, do not kiss me! You had promised me!

BELLIDOR (*redoubling his kisses*).

O, those were never promises of love!
Love cannot say that love will not adore,
And lovers make no promises; never they
Shall promise aught who once have given all!
Love every moment gives the all it has,
And if it promise to reserve or stay

One kiss, it gives a hundred thousand more
To efface the wrong done to its lips itself.
[*Embracing her more ardently and seeking to draw her away.*
Come, come! The night is passing, and the sky
Already paler, and the horses fret.
There is now one step only more to take,
One to descend —
[*Suddenly observing that* BEATRICE *is failing in his arms.*
You do not answer me?
I do not hear you breathe: your knees give way!
Come! Never wait until the envious dawn
Outlays its golden snares across the path
That leads to happiness!

BEATRICE (*who is almost swooning*).
No, I cannot yet!

BELLIDOR.

Love, you grow pale! and all my kisses die
Quenched on your lips like sparks in waters cold.
Raise your fair face and give me your dear mouth,
That strives to smile no more. Oh! it is this,
This heavy veil that so constrains your throat,
And weighs upon your heart. 'Twas made for death,
Never for life!

[*With slow and cautious movements he unwraps the veil which envelops the face of* BEATRICE, *who is still unconscious. Presently the first tresses of hair begin to fall, then others and still others, till at last all, like flames unimprisoned, fall*

suddenly over BEATRICE'S *face. She seems to awaken.*

BELLIDOR (*with a cry of ecstasy*).

O!

BEATRICE (*softly, as if she came from a dream*).

Ah, what have you done?
Bellidor? What is this my hands perceive?
This softness that is tender with my face?

BELLIDOR (*passionately kissing her dishevelled hair*).

Behold, behold! It is your proper fire
Awakens you, and you are overwhelmed
With your own beauty! Lo, you are enmeshed
With your own radiance! O, you never knew,
I never knew, how beautiful you were!

I thought that I had seen you, and I thought
I loved you! Ay, and but a moment gone
You were the fairest of my boyish dreams:
Most beautiful of all most beautiful
I find you now to my awakened eyes,
And to my hands that touch you, and in my heart
That now discovers you! Ah, wait, wait, wait!
You must in all be like your face—must be
Utterly liberated, wholly queen!

[*He removes* BEATRICE'S *mantle with a sudden gesture, and she appears clad in a robe of white woollen; then, while he makes a sign in the direction of the door, and the boy who was with him at the opening of the scene draws near, bearing costly raiment, a golden girdle, and*

a necklet of pearls, BEATRICE *falls to kneeling on the flags, prostrate and sobbing, her face hidden in the folds of the mantle and veil, which she has gathered up.*

BEATRICE.

No, no! I would — I would not!
[*Moving on her knees to the* VIRGIN'S *feet.*
O, you see,
Lady! I cannot struggle any more!
No, not without you succour me! I can pray
No more, no more, if you abandon me!

BELLIDOR (*hastening to* BEATRICE *and wrapping her in the costly garments which he has taken from the child*).

It is time, Beatrice! See the raiment, see
The raiment of your life that now begins!
You are no slave I rescue from her lord,
You are a queen I bring to happiness!

BEATRICE (*still kneeling, her hands clinging to the grille that encloses the base of the image*).

Our Lady, hear me! I can speak no more,
And no more can I any longer pray;
No, I can only sob. I did not know
I loved him quite like this; I did not know
That I loved you so much. O listen, look!
All that I ask you is a sign, a sign,
A sign of your hand, a smile of your eyes, no more!
I am only a girl who does not understand . . .
They have so often told me that you grant
Everything, and that you were very kind,
That you were pitiful . . .

BELLIDOR (*endeavouring to raise her up, and to draw her gently away from the grille*).

Ay, so she is,
For she is queen of a heaven that love has made!
Unclasp these tender hands the iron chills,
Look in her face — it is in no wise wroth,
It smiles, it shines; her eyes have seen the prayer
That shines in yours; it is as though your tears
Illumed her eyes that smile. Is it not she
That asks, and you that pardon? In my eyes
You are confounded, and I seem to see
Two sisters, and I know that love is here;
And they bless one another with their hands.

BEATRICE (*raising her head and looking at the* VIRGIN).

I was told often I was like her.

BELLIDOR.

Look!
Regard, across your own, her tresses, thus,
While so my hands outspread the shimmering veil.
Would one not say, rays of the self-same light,
The self-same bliss?

[*While he speaks three hours are struck on the convent clock.*

BEATRICE (*suddenly rising*).

Listen!

BELLIDOR.

Three hours!

BEATRICE.

The hour
Of matins that I should have sounded!

BELLIDOR.

Come!
The dawn grows nigh, the windows pale
to blue!

BEATRICE.

The windows I would always open wide
Before the dawn, so might the morning
air,
Fresh, and the daylight, and the song of
birds
Welcome my sisters as they came from
sleep.
There is the cord that rings the bell to say
Night and their sleep are ended; there
the door,
The chapel door of which no more my
hands

Will push apart the leaves to greet the
dawn,
And altar-candles other hands will light.
Here is the basket of the poor: ay, soon
They will come hither, and will call my
name,
And see no one at all, and vainly seek
These hands they are wont to bless when
I dispense
The humble garments that my sisters sew
In peace and silence of the spacious halls
The while they pray. . . .

BELLIDOR.

Come, for the day is nigh;
Your sisters will awaken; and it seems
Already that I hear their steps resound. . . .

BEATRICE.

Ay, they are coming, ay, my sisters come,
Who loved me all so well, and held me
too

So holy! Here will they discover all
That of the lowly Beatrice remains;
Her veil and mantle lying on the stones.

[*Suddenly she takes up the veil and mantle and deposits them on the grille at the feet of the image.*

But no; I would never one of them should think
I trampled underfoot the robe of peace
They gave me, Mother — see, I give them you,
And you will keep them. In your hands I place
All my possessions, all that I received
In these four years.
I lay my chaplet here,
My chaplet with the cross of silver; here
My discipline, and here the three great keys
I carried at my girdle: this the key
That opens the great door; the garden, this,

And this, the chapel. I shall see no more
The garden growing green, and no more now
Unlock the chapel where we used to sing
'Mid odour of the incense. You know all,
Lady, and I know nothing.
There on high
Is it writ that naught is pardoned? And that love
Is cursed, and that none may expiate it?
Tell, tell, O tell me! For I am not lost
Except you will it! I am not now lost
If you but make a sign! I do not ask
Aught of impossible miracle, only this:
A single sign were all enough; a sign
So small that none should see it! If the shadow
Cast by the lamp, slumbering on your brow,
Move but a line I will not go away!
I will not go away! O look at me!

Mother! I gaze and gaze! I wait!

[*She gazes for a long while at the* VIRGIN'S *face. All is motionless and silent.*

BELLIDOR (*embracing her and kissing her passionately on the lips*).

Come!

BEATRICE (*for the first time returning his kiss*).

Yes!

[*Enlaced in one another's arms, they go forth into the dawning world. The door is left open. Soon is heard the sound of horses that gallop away, away into the distance. The curtain falls, and shortly afterwards the bell of the convent is heard in the dawn, loudly ringing matins.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT THE SECOND

The last strokes of the bell ringing matins are heard. Then the curtain rises. The scene is that of the last Act, save that now the great door of the convent is closed, and all the corridor windows are open to the first rays of the sun. Hardly has the curtain risen when the VIRGIN, *as at the end of a long, divine sleep, is seen to stir, to come to life; then slowly she descends the steps of the pedestal, and reaches the grille, and over her glorious robe and tresses she puts on the veil and mantle that* BEATRICE *has abandoned. Then as she begins to sing softly under her breath, she turns to the right, stretching forth her hand, when,*

through the door of the chapel, which opens to her gesture, are seen the tapers of the altar; which are magically one by one being kindled; then, continuing her holy song, she revives the flame of the lamp, and having placed before the pedestal the basket which contains the garments to be given to the poor, she advances to the great door of the convent.

THE VIRGIN (*singing*).

I hold to every sin,
  To every soul that weeps,
My hands with pardon filled
  Out of the starry deeps.

There is no sin that lives
  If love have vigil kept;
There is no soul that dies
  If love but once have wept.

Sister Beatrice

And though in many paths
Of earth love lose its way,
Its tears shall find me out,
And shall not go astray.

[*During the last words of the song, a hand knocks timidly at the gate of the convent. The* VIRGIN *opens; and there appears on the threshold a little girl, barefooted, and very ragged and poor. She is half hidden behind the oaken door-post; she advances only her head, and gazes at the* VIRGIN *with astonishment.*

THE VIRGIN.

Good day, Allette, why do you hide yourself?

[*Enraptured and afraid, making the sign of the cross as she approaches.*

ALLETTE.

Why have you put that light upon your robe?

THE VIRGIN.

There is light everywhere when the sun comes.

ALLETTE.

Why have you put those stars into your eyes?

THE VIRGIN.

There are often stars in the depth of eyes that pray.

ALLETTE.

Why have you put that light inside your hands?

THE VIRGIN.

There is always light in the hands of alms-givers.

ALLETTE.

I have come alone here.

THE VIRGIN.

Where are our poor brothers?

ALLETTE.

They dare not come because of what folk say.

THE VIRGIN.

What do they say?

ALLETTE.

They say that they have seen Beatrice riding on the Prince's horse.

THE VIRGIN.

Am I not like the lowly Beatrice?

ALLETTE.

They say they have seen her — that she spoke to them.

THE VIRGIN.

Only God saw her not, and nothing heard.
[*Taking the child in her arms and kissing her on the forehead.*
O little one, Allette, there is no one else
To-day that I can kiss. Ay, innocence
Cannot betray me, though it comprehend.
[*Looking into the child's eyes.*
How pure the human soul when thus one sees it!
Most beautiful the angels are, but they
Never know tears. Poor child, enough, enough!
Behold yours falling; you shall know their number!
[*She sets the child down on the threshold.*
But our poor brothers — where are they? Allette,
Go forth to them, and tell them all of love
Full of impatience: go, and bid them haste.

ALLETTE (*who turns her head and looks away from the convent*).

O Sister Beatrice, they are coming — see!

[*And indeed the poor, the sick and infirm, the women carrying little children, have timidly drawn nigh, and, thinking that they recognize* BEATRICE, *fearful, hesitating, and astonished, they approach the threshold, and, halting outside the door, they gaze and wait.*

THE VIRGIN (*leaning over the poor-basket, which contains clothes*).

What has befallen? Brothers, wherefore stay?
Hasten! the sun already mounts: the time
Is ripe for prayer; shortly my sisters pass.
The door will soon be shut; then, till the morrow,

No more of alms. O come you, all of you!
O hasten, all of you; the time is now.

A Poor Old Man (*coming forward*).

Now, sister, we to-night have seen two ghosts. . . .

The Virgin (*giving him a cloak, which suddenly becomes radiant as she draws it out of the basket*).

Dream now no more of phantoms of the night.

A Cripple (*advancing in turn*).

We have had wicked thoughts this night, my sister.

The Virgin (*drawing from the basket another garment, which seems suddenly to become covered with jewels*).

Open your eyes, my brother: it is now

Sister Beatrice

The hour of pardon. Come, O all of you, come!

A Poor Woman.

I, sister, for my mother need a shroud . . .

Another Poor Woman.

I beg you, sister, that our latest-born . . .

[*The poor folk, lamenting, and greedy of charity, their arms outheld, press in a crowd about the* Virgin, *who, leaning over the basket, fills her arms from it again and again with garments glittering with rays of light, sparkling veils, and robes of linen that grow luminous. In measure as the* Virgin *exhausts the basket it overflows with a still greater abundance of raiment, more and more costly, and more and more resplendent; and as though intoxicated by the miracle she herself*

has worked, she cries out, as she distributes her treasures to the poor folk, filling their hands, covering their shoulders, and wrapping their infants in dazzling and blazing tissues.

THE VIRGIN.

O come you hither, hither, all of you come!
The snowy shroud is here, and here behold
The smiling swaddling-bands! Ah, here behold
Life, death, and life again! Come hither all!
It is the hour of love: and what of love?
It has no limits! Come you, all of you, come!
Give one another aid! and all offence
Let each forgive the other! And through life

Mingle your happinesses and your tears!
Love one another: pray for those that fall;
Come all, come hither, all of you pass by!
Come, all of you! God does not see the ill
Done without hatred. Pardon one another:
There is no sin forgiveness does not reach.

[*Now the poor people, stupefied and bewildered, are covered with resplendent garments. Some, their raiment rustling with precious stones, waving and swaying as they go, flee into the open, shouting for joy. Others, sobbing for gratitude, surround the holy* VIRGIN, *and seek to kiss her hands. But the greater number, silent, and as though smitten with a divine terror, kneel upon the steps*

of the entrance and murmur their prayers. Then a stroke of the bell is heard; the basket is suddenly exhausted; the VIRGIN *gently disperses the poor folk who press about her, and closes the door on them.*

THE VIRGIN.

Go in peace, brethren: 't is the hour of prayer.

[*The murmur of the poor folk at prayer is still heard through the closed door. The murmur little by little becomes an indistinct hymn of gratitude and ecstasy. A second, then a third stroke of the bell resounds; and proceeding from the left end of the corridor, the* NUNS, *with the* ABBESS *at their head, advance toward the chapel.*

THE ABBESS (*halting before the* VIRGIN, *who, with bended head, and hands disposed upon her breast, waits by the closed door*).

Hear, Sister Beatrice. This month of sun
Matins are rung a quarter short of three.
Now you shall three days fast, shall three
nights pray
Before the Virgin's feet that was a mother.

THE VIRGIN (*bowing with the humblest gestures of assent*).

My Mother, God be praised!

[THE ABBESS, *resuming her steps, reaches the pedestal, which before was hidden from her by the wall from which springs the vaulting of the great doorway. There she is about to kneel, when, upon raising her eyes, she stops, cries aloud, lets fall the book that she carries,*

and makes a gesture of unspeakable surprise and horror.

THE ABBESS.

She is not there!

[*Disquieted, then terrified, the* NUNS *run to the* ABBESS, *surrounding her and crowding about the pedestal. The first moment of stupefaction having passed, they all speak, cry aloud, moan, and lament at the same moment, by turns outraged, terrified, sobbing, upright, kneeling, prostrated, or staggering.*

THE NUNS.

She is no longer there!
The Virgin gone!
Her image has been stolen!
Infidels!
Our Mother, O our Mother!
Sacrilege!

Sister Beatrice

The cloister is profaned!
O sacrilege!
The roof will fall upon us!
Sacrilege!
Sacrilege!
Sacrilege!
Sacrilege!

THE ABBESS (*calling aloud*).

Sister Beatrice!

[*The* VIRGIN *advances, and halts before the pedestal, close to the* ABBESS. *She gazes fixedly at the spot where her image used to stand, and her impassive eyes and face, as though sealed from the outer world, are, as it were, radiant with an imperturbable hope and silence.*

THE ABBESS.

You, sister Beatrice, were she in charge,
And it was yours by day or night to wake

And watch above the majesty of her
Who made this convent-house her treasury
Of graces, and to house her predilections:
I understand your anguish, and your fear
I share. Yet fear you naught! The Will Divine
Has oftentimes designs that must confound
Our vigilance and zeal. But answer me;
Speak, for you must have seen; speak, you must know!

[*The* VIRGIN *is silent.*

Answer me! Speak! What is amiss with you?
It seems to me there is somewhat strange —it seems
At moments that your face grows radiant . . .
And say, what are these garments, now no more
The same as all we wear? Why, do my eyes

Deceive me? One that looks at you would say
You are no more the same. What have you there,
There, there, beneath your mantle, this that gleams
So brightly through it?

[*She feels the* VIRGIN'S *mantle.*

Ay, and what this stuff
Whose folds translucent run ablaze with light,
When my hands touch it?

[*She opens the* VIRGIN'S *mantle, and beholds the girdle of wrought gold.*

Mercy! What is this?

[*She removes the mantle entirely, and in the same moment of outraged stupefaction she snatches off the veil which covers the* VIRGIN'S *hair, and the latter, always motionless, and as though insensible, appears suddenly clothed after the*

manner of and exactly in all points resembling her image that occupied the pedestal during the First Act. At this spectacle there falls on the ABBESS *and the* NUNS *who crowd round her a moment of silent stupefaction and incredulous anguish. Then the* ABBESS, *who is the first to regain control over herself, covers her face with a gesture of despairing horror and malediction, and cries:*

Lord God!

THE NUNS.

Our Lady! She has robbed the image!
Speak, Sister Beatrice!
She does not answer!
The Demons! O, the Demons!
Beware the walls!
They will avenge themselves!
O madness, madness!

Sister Beatrice

O horror, horror! Let us not await
The thunder-bolt! O sacrilege, sacrilege!
Sacrilege! Sacrilege!

[*There is a movement of recoil, terror, and flight among the* NUNS; *but the* ABBESS *restrains them, raising her hands and her voice.*

THE ABBESS.

Listen all, my daughters!
Nay, do not fly! Let us await our lot;
Let us not separate; let all our hands
And all our prayers hedge in the sacrilege,
And strive to appease the ensuing wrath!

SISTER CLEMENCY.

I pray
Mother, you will not tarry!

SISTER FELICITY.

Let us go
To find the priest!

SISTER CLEMENCY.

I saw him passing by
Deep in the chapel.

THE ABBESS.

You are right; yes, go,
Sisters Felicity and Clemency.
Go quickly; yes, go quickly; he will know
Better than we what should be done to stay,
If yet it be not all too late to stay,
The sword of the Archangel, and to foil
The triumph of the Accursèd One. Ah me!
My sisters, my poor sisters! Horror has
A name no longer, and our eyes have plumbed
The deepest abysms of hell!

SISTER GISELA (*approaching the* VIRGIN).

Profanatrix!

SISTER BALBINA (*also approaching her*).

Sacrilege! Sacrilege!

SISTER REGINA (*beside herself*).

Demon! Demon! Demon!

SISTER EGLANTINE (*in a mournful and very gentle voice*).

O, Sister Beatrice, what have you done?

[*At the sound of this voice the* VIRGIN *turns her head, and looks at* SISTER EGLANTINE *with a smile of divine sweetness.*

SISTER BALBINA (*to* SISTER EGLANTINE).

She looks at you.

SISTER GISELA.

She seems to awake.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

Perhaps.

You did not know —

THE ABBESS.

No, Sister Eglantine,
I will not have you speak to her!

[*At this moment the* PRIEST, *wearing his priestly appointments, appears at the door of the chapel, followed by two* NUNS *and the terrified Choristers.*

THE PRIEST.

Pray, pray!
My sisters, pray for her!

THE ABBESS (*throwing herself on her knees*).

You know, my father . . .

THE PRIEST (*in a stern voice*).

Hear, Sister Beatrice!

[*The* VIRGIN *remains motionless.*

THE PRIEST (*in a loud voice*).

Sister Beatrice!

[*The* VIRGIN *remains motionless.*

THE PRIEST (*in a terrible voice*).

Hear, Sister Beatrice! Now, for the third
time
I call you, in the name of the living God,
Whose anger trembles round about these
walls —
I call you by your name!

THE ABBESS.

She does not hear!

SISTER REGINA.

She does not wish to hear!

SISTER BALBINA.

O misery!
O woe to all of us!

SISTER GISELA.

Father! Intercede!
Have pity on us!

THE PRIEST.

Doubt is at an end.
Now do I recognise the gloomy pride
Of the Prince of Darkness and the Father of Pride!

[*Turning to the* ABBESS.

My sister, I deliver her to you,
And mark that man's indulgence nowise may
Cheat the prerogatives of Love Divine.
Go, go, my sisters; drag the culprit forth
To the foot of the holy altars; then tear off,
There, in the presence of that One to whom
The angels bow — there tear off, one by one,
The vestments and the gems of sacrilege.
Unloose your girdles; every scourge twist tight,
And from the pillars of the portal take
The heavy lashes of prevaricators,

And rods of grievous penance. May your arms
Be cruel, may your hands be pitiless!
Mercy it is that lends them strength, and Love
That blesses them! Go forth, my sisters, go!

[*The* NUNS *drag the* VIRGIN *away. She walks indifferent in their midst, docile and impassive. All, save* SISTER EGLANTINE, *have already untied the double-knotted cords which gird their loins. They enter the chapel, and the doors close; only the* PRIEST *remains, and bows himself before the forsaken pedestal. There is for some time silence. Suddenly a song of unspeakable sweetness filters through the doors of the chapel. It is the sacred canticle of the* VIRGIN, *the Ave Maris Stella,*

which sounds as though sung by the distant voices of angels. Little by little the hymn becomes more distinct, draws near, grows fuller, becomes universal, as though an invisible host, ever more and more innumerable, took it up with a might ever more and more ardent, ever more and more celestial. At the same time there is heard from within the chapel the sound of seats overturned, of candelabras falling, of stalls thrown into confusion, and the exclamations of terrified human voices. Finally the two leaves of the door are violently thrown wide, and the nave appears all inundated with flames and strange splendours, which undulate, blossom forth, gyrate, and sweep past one another, infinitely more dazzling than

the splendour of the sun whose rays light the corridor. Then, amid the delirious Alleluias and Hosannas which burst forth on every hand — confounded, haggard, transfigured, mad with joy and superhuman awe, waving armsful of blossoming boughs that overflow with miraculous flowers which increase their ecstasy, enveloped from head to foot in living garlands which fetter their steps, blinded by the rain of flower-petals which stream from the vaulting — the NUNS *tumultuously surge into the too narrow doorway, and uncertainly descend the steps, encumbered by the marvellous showers; and while at each step they strip their burdens of their flowers, only to see them renewing themselves in their hands,*

they surround the ancient PRIEST, *who now again stands upright, those that follow advancing in turn through the billows of blossoms that surge continually over the steps of the chapel-door.*

THE NUNS (*all together and on every hand, while they emerge from the chapel, fill the corridor, singing and embracing one another amid the deluge of flowers*).

A miracle!
A miracle!
A miracle!
My father, O, my father!
I am blind!
My father, O my father!
A miracle!
Hosanna!
O, Hosanna!
O, the Lord

Is close about us! O, the Heavens are open!
The angels overwhelm us, and the flowers
Pursue us! Hosanna! Hosanna! Sister Beatrice
Is holy! Ring the bell, O peal the bell,
Until the bronze be shattered! She is holy!
Ah, Sister Beatrice is holy, holy!

SISTER REGINA.

I sought to touch her holy vestments. Then —

SISTER EGLANTINE (*crowned with flowers more radiant than the rest*).

The flames brake forth, the shafts of light spoke!

SISTER CLEMENCY.

The angels of the altars toward us turned!

SISTER GISELA.

The saints bowed over her, and joined their hands!

SISTER EGLANTINE.

And all the statues of the pillars knelt!

SISTER FELICITY.

The archangels all their wings unfurled and sang!

SISTER GISELA (*waving heavy garlands of roses*).

And living roses brake her bonds in twain!

SISTER BALBINA (*waving enormous stems of lilies*).

Miraculous lilies blossomed on the rods!

SISTER FELICITY (*waving luminous palm-branches*).

The lashes blazed into long golden palms!

THE ABBESS (*kneeling at the feet of the* PRIEST).

My father, O my father, I have sinned.
For Sister Beatrice is holy!

THE PRIEST (*kneeling also*).

Yea!
My daughters, yea, my daughters, I have sinned!
Behold the ways of God past finding out!

[*At this moment there is heard a knock on the entrance-door of the convent, and the* VIRGIN, *once more human of aspect, and humbly clad in the mantle and veil of* BEATRICE, *appears in the threshold of the chapel. She descends the steps, her eyes downcast and her hands folded together, passes among her kneeling sisters, over the flowers, which stand erect as she goes, and*

resuming, as if nothing had happened, the duties of her charge, she goes to the door and throws it open wide. Three pilgrims enter, poor, old, and haggard, to whom she bows low, and taking from a tripod of bronze near by the aspergus and the basin of silver, she sprinkles the water over their ponderous hands in silence.

THE END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT THE THIRD

The scene is the same. On the pedestal the image of the VIRGIN *stands, as in the First Act; the veil, mantle, and keys of* SISTER BEATRICE *are hanging on the grille; the chapel-door is open, and the candles of the altar are lit; the lamp is burning before the image, and the poor-basket overflows with clothing: in a word, all is precisely as it was at the moment when the* NUN *fled with* PRINCE BELLIDOR, *except that the entrance-door of the convent is now closed. It is early dawn in winter; the last strokes of matins are heard, though no one rings the bell, and in the porch of the chapel the bell-rope is seen to rise*

and fall in empty air. Then, the bell having ceased to sound, a silence falls, which is broken by three blows struck slowly on the convent door. At the third blow the door moves without sound on its hinges, though no one opens it; and the two leaves are thrown wide open on the white, desolate, vacant countryside; and, amid the whirling of the snow which drives upon the threshold there advances, haggard, thin, and unrecognisable, she who was once SISTER BEATRICE. *She is covered with rags; her hair, already grey, is scattered over her face, which is grievously pinched and livid. Her eyes, bruised and black, have in them only the remote and impassive gaze of those who are about to die, and hold no longer any shadow of hope. She halts a moment in the open doorway, and then, as she beholds no one, she enters, swaying,*

groping, and leaning on the doors, sweeping the corridor with her eyes, with the uneasiness of an animal long hunted. But the corridor is empty, and she takes a few more fearful steps, until, perceiving the image of the VIRGIN, *she gives a cry, in which are mingled who shall say what vain and weary hopes of deliverance? — and throws herself, kneeling and fainting, at the feet of the statue.*

BEATRICE.

My Mother, I am here! Repulse me not,
For you are all I have now in the world!
I hoped that I should see you once again,
And I have come too late, because my eyes
Are closing: I no longer see you smile;
And when I stretch my hands out after you

I feel they are dead. I have forgotten how
To pray, I have forgotten how to speak,
And — since I needs must tell you everything —
I have wept so many tears that long ago
I lost all heart ever to cry again.
Forgive me, O forgive me, if I speak
A name that never should again be heard:
You would not recognise your daughter else.
O see to what estate have brought her love,
And sin, and all that men call happiness!
I left you more than twenty years ago;
And if so be 't is not the will of God
Men should be happy, surely then to me
He should intend no ill, for happy — O,
I have not been that! Thus I to-day return,
But ask for nothing, for the hour is gone,
And to receive I have no longer strength.
I come to die here in this holy house,

If but my sisters will permit that I
Fall where I fall. O, never doubt, they
know!
The scandal of my life has been so great
Down yonder in the town, they will have
heard . . .
But they, they know so little; even you,
You who know all things, you will never
know
The wickedness that they have made me
do,
And all that I have suffered.
I would fain
Tell them to all, the agonies of love!
[*Looking around her.*
But why am I alone? Lo, all the house
Is void as though my sins had emptied
it . . .
O, who has taken up the place I fled,
My place before the holy altars, who?
Who guards the threshold that my feet
have soiled?

The lamp is lit: I see the tapers shine;
Matins have rung, and here behold the day
That grows, and none appears.
[*Perceiving the mantle and veil that hung upon the grille.*
But what is here?
[*She raises herself a little, draws nearer on her knees, and feels the veil and mantle.*
Already my poor hands are so near death
They know no longer if the things they touch
Are things of this life or the other world:
But is not this the mantle that I left . . .
Yesterday . . . five-and-twenty years ago?
[*Taking up the mantle and mechanically putting it on.*
It seems the shape — and yet seems very long.
When I was happy, when I went erect,
It fitted well enough. [*Taking the veil.*

Now the long veil,
That now shall be my winding-sheet. O Mother,
Forgive me if it be a sacrilege!
I am cold, I am naked; for my wretched clothes
No longer know my body how to hide,
That knows no longer where to hide itself.
Was it not you, my Mother, kept them safe,
Is it not you who give them to me now
Against the hour redoubtable, that thus
The pitiless flames that wait me may perhaps
A little hesitate and be less cruel?

[*A sound of steps and of opening doors is heard.*

What do I hear?

[*Three strokes of the bell resound, announcing, as before, the arrival of the* NUNS *in the corridor.*

Sister Beatrice

What do I hear? O Mother!
The door swings open, and my sisters come!
I cannot! Never! O, have pity, pity!
For the walls crush me, the light suffocates,
And shame, shame, shame, is graven on the stones
That rise up, up against me! Ah! Ah! Ah!

[*She falls fainting at the feet of the image. The* NUNS, *preceded by the* ABBESS, *advance along the vaulted passage, as in the preceding Act, on their way to the chapel. Many of them are very old; and the* ABBESS *walks painfully, bent double, supporting herself on a staff. Scarcely have they entered but they perceive* BEATRICE *lying motionless across the corridor; they run to her and crowd about her, uneasy, frightened, and dismayed.*

THE ABBESS (*who first sees her*).

O, Sister Beatrice is dead!

SISTER CLEMENCY.

The Heavens
Gave her, the Lord has taken her away!

SISTER FELICITY.

Her crown was ready, and the angels called.

SISTER EGLANTINE (*raising and supporting the head of* SISTER BEATRICE, *which she kisses with a kind of pious awe*).

No, no, she is not dead: she shudders, breathes!

THE ABBESS.

But look, how pale she is! But see, how thin!

SISTER CLEMENCY.

As though one night had aged her ten
long years!

SISTER FELICITY.

She must have suffered, striving, till the
dawn!

SISTER CLEMENCY.

And all alone against the angelic host
That sought to draw her hence!

SISTER EGLANTINE.

She suffered much
Already yesternight; she trembled, wept,
Who, ever since the miracle of flowers,
Nursed in her eyes that smile miraculous.
She would not have me take her place; she said
"I wait," she said, "until my saint returns."

SISTER BALBINA.

What saint?

[*The* ABBESS, *raising her eyes at hazard, sees the image of the* VIRGIN *re-established in the pedestal. The* NUNS *raise their heads, and, with the exception of* SISTER EGLANTINE, *who continues to hold the fainting form of* BEATRICE *in her arms, they all turn with cries of ecstasy and throw themselves on their knees at the foot of the pedestal.*

THE NUNS.

The Virgin has returned! Our Lady!
Our Mother is saved! And she has all her jewels!
Her crown is brighter, and her eyes more deep,
And sweeter her regard! She has come back

From Heaven, and brought Heaven back
again to us!
Yea, on the wings of her most holy
prayers . . .

SISTER EGLANTINE.

Come, come! I hear her heart no longer!
Come!
[*The* NUNS *turn and once more crowd about* BEATRICE.

SISTER CLEMENCY (*kneeling near her*).

Ah, Sister Beatrice, you shall not leave
Your sisters on this high miraculous day!

SISTER FELICITY.

The Virgin smiles on you; her lips appeal!

SISTER EGLANTINE.

Alas, she cannot hear! She seems to
suffer;
Her face grows hollow —

SISTER CLEMENCY.

Bear her to her bed.
Come, let us bear her yonder to her cell.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

No: let us rather leave her nigh to Her
Who loves and fences her with miracles.

[*The* NUNS *enter the cell, returning with cloaks and linen sheets, on which they lay* BEATRICE *at the feet of the statue.*

SISTER CLEMENCY.

She cannot breathe — undo her veil and mantle.

[*She does as she advises, and the* NUNS *behold* BEATRICE *covered with rags.*

SISTER FELICITY.

My Mother, have you seen her dripping rags?

SISTER BALBINA.

O, she is quite benumbed with melting snow!

SISTER CLEMENCY.

We never knew her hair had grown so white.

SISTER FELICITY.

Her naked feet are soiled with wayside mire!

THE ABBESS.

Hold we our peace, my daughters; for we live
Near heaven; the hands that touch her will remain
Luminous.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

See, her breast is heaving! See!
Her eyes are going to open!

[BEATRICE *opens her eyes, moves her head a little, and gazes about her.*

BEATRICE (*as though emerging from a dream, and still bewildered, in a remote voice*).

When they died —
My children — when they died. . . . Why
do you smile?
They died of want.

THE ABBESS.

We do not smile; we are glad,
Ay, glad to see you coming back to life.

BEATRICE.

I coming back to life!
[*Looking about her with advancing recognition.*
Yes, I remember,
I came here in the depth of my distress.
Look on me not so fearfully: I no more
Shall be the butt of scandal: you shall now
Have all your will of me. No, none shall
know,

SISTER EGLANTINE (*kissing her forehead*).

I kiss this pure brow, crowned with
miracles.

BEATRICE (*hiding her face in her hands*).

What would you all? What has befallen?
Once,
When I was happy, one was never
pardoned;
Kiss not this brow: it has been friends
with lust!
But you that touched it, tell me who you
are?
I am not certain if my weary eyes
Betray me; but if they see yonder still,
You are Sister Eglantine.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

Yes, I am she.
That Sister Eglantine whom you have
loved.

BEATRICE.

You, five-and-twenty years ago, I told
I was unhappy.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

Five-and-twenty years
Since, among all our sisters, God chose you.

BEATRICE.

You tell me that, and no least bitterness
Lurks in your voice. What has befallen me
I cannot fathom. I am weak and ill,
And cannot recollect — and every word
Astounds me. I was inattentive. See,
I think that you deceive yourselves. I am —
Cover your faces, make the holy sign! —
I am Sister Beatrice!

THE ABBESS.

But yes, we know!
Our Sister Beatrice, our sister, ours,

Purest among us, the miraculous lamb,
Godchild of angels, the immaculate flame!

BEATRICE.

Ah, is it truly you? I did not know.
Mother, you used to go so upright; now
How you do stoop! I have also learned
to stoop,
And now behold me fallen. Yes, I know
All of you: there is Sister Clemency.

SISTER CLEMENCY (*bending her head and smiling*).

Yes, yes.

BEATRICE.

Sister Felicity.

SISTER FELICITY (*smiling*).

It is.
Sister Felicity who came the first
Out of the blossoming chapel.

BEATRICE.

And I think
You have not suffered, for you seem not
sad.
I was the younger: I am the elder now.

THE ABBESS.

That is no doubt because of love divine
Being a terrible burden.

BEATRICE.

Mother, no.
It is the love of man that is the burden,
The weary burden. You do pardon me,
You also pardon me?

THE ABBESS (*kneeling at* BEATRICE'S *feet*).

O daughter mine,
If any have need of pardon, it is she
Who can at last prostrate herself before
Your feet.

BEATRICE.

But do you know what I have done?

THE ABBESS.

You have done naught but miracle, have been
Since the great day of flowers, our soul's light,
The incense of our prayers, and the source
Of grace, the gate of marvels!

BEATRICE.

But I fled
One night, now five-and-twenty years ago,
With the Prince Bellidor.

THE ABBESS.

Of whom do you speak,
Of whom do you speak, my daughter?

BEATRICE.

Of myself!
I say myself! You will not understand?

One evening, five-and-twenty years ago,
I fled, and when three months were at an end
He did not love me. Then I lost all shame,
I lost all reason, and I lost all hope.
All men by turns this body have profaned,
This clay to its God unfaithful. And I took
Pleasure in this, and called men after me.
I fell so low that Heaven's angels thence
Could not have risen for all their mighty wings.
So many crimes I have committed, I
Have often even sin itself defiled!

THE ABBESS (*gently placing her hand on* BEATRICE'S *lips*).

Daughter, the Shadow tempts you; speak no more,
For rising anguish robs you of yourself.

SISTER CLEMENCY.

She is worn out with miracle.

SISTER FELICITY.

And grace
Confounds her.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

The air of heaven weighs her down.

BEATRICE (*who struggles, pushes away the hand of the* ABBESS *and sits up*).

I do not wander! No, I tell you, no!
This is no air of heaven, but of earth,
And this is truth! Ah, you are all too mild!
You are too soft and imperturbable!
And you know nothing! I would rather far
You should afflict me, but should learn at last!
O, you live here and do your penances,

And say your prayers, and seek to expiate sin,
But look you, it is I, and all my kind,
Who live beyond the pale and have no rest,
That do the bitterest penance to the end!

ABBESS.

Pray, pray, my sisters; now the final trial!

SISTER EGLANTINE.

The triumph of the angels irks the Fiend!

BEATRICE.

Yes, yes, it is the Fiend, the Fiend prevails!
See you these hands? They have a human shape
No longer; see, they cannot open now.
I had to sell them after soul and body.
They buy hands also when no more is left.

THE ABBESS (*wiping the sweat from* BEATRICE'S *face*).

May Heaven's angels, who about thy couch
Now watch thee, deign before thy streaming face
To spread their wings!

BEATRICE.

Ah! Heaven's angels! Ah!
Where are they, tell me, and what do they do?
Have I not told you? Why, I have not now
My children, for the three most lovely died
When I no more was lovely, and the last,
Lest it should suffer, being one night mad,
I killed. And there were others never born,
Although they cried for birth. And still the sun

Shone, and the stars returned, and justice
slept,
And only the most evil were happy and
proud.

THE ABBESS.

The strife is terrible about great saints.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

It is at Heaven's gates the infernal fire
Wastes the huge angers of its futile rage.

BEATRICE (*falling back exhausted*).

I care no more — I stifle — what you will
Be done to me. I had to tell you all.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

The archangels bear her forth.

SISTER FELICITY.

The phalanxes
Of the celestial host have brought back
peace.

THE ABBESS.

The evil dream has fled. Now smile again,
My poor and holy sister, while you think
On all the blasphemies you did not speak.
A baneful voice usurping on your lips
Exhaled them in the rage of final loss.

BEATRICE.

It was my voice.

THE ABBESS.

My good and holy sister,
Assure your heart, and have you no regrets.
For that was not the voice that all we know,
The dear and gentle voice, the angel's pilot,
The health of sickness, that so many years
Quickened our prayers.

SISTER EGLANTINE.

Fear nothing, sister; nay,
In the last conflict you shall never lose
The palm and diadem of a life of love,
And innocence, and prayer.

BEATRICE.

Never one hour
Since that unhappy hour, in all my life,
There never was an hour that was not marked
By mortal sin.

THE ABBESS.

My daughter, pray to God!
You are most holy; yet the enemy
Tempts you, and scruples lead your sense astray.
How should you have committed all these sins
So dreadful? It is nigh on thirty years

You have been here, of threshold and of altar
Most humble servitor: my very eyes
Have followed you in all your deeds and prayers,
And I can answer before God for them
As I would for my own. But would to Heaven
That mine were like to yours! It is not here,
Within these cloisters, but without, beyond,
Out in the world estrayed, that sin triumphs:
And of that world, all thanks to God, you know
Nothing, for never have you issued forth
Out of the shadow of the sanctuary.

BEATRICE.

Never gone forth? O, I can think no more!

It was too long, so long, too long ago!
I am near death; but you should tell me truth;
Is it that you forgive me, or deceive,
Unwilling I should know it?

THE ABBESS.

None deceives,
None pardons. We have seen you every day
Before the altar punctual, to our hours
Attentive, and to all the humble cares
Of alms and of the threshold.

BEATRICE.

I am here,
My Mother, and I do not think I dream.
Look at this hand: I tear it with my nails;
See, the blood shows and flows; the blood is real.
I have no other proofs. So tell me now,
If you have pity, here, in face of God,
For we are close to God when people die,—

If you do wish it, I will say no more,
But if you can for pity tell me, now,
What did you say, and what it was you did
When five-and-twenty years ago you found
One morning that the door was opened wide,
The corridor deserted — when you found
The altar abandoned — when you found the veil,
The veil and mantle? . . . Mother, I can no more.

THE ABBESS.

Daughter, this memory, I understand,
Must trouble you and overwhelm you still,
Though five-and-twenty years ago befell
The wondrous miracle whereby your God
Elected you. The Virgin left us then,
To mount again to heaven; ere she went
Investing you with her most holy robe
And sacred ornaments, and lastly crowned
You with her golden crown, to teach us so

In boundless mercy that while she was gone
You took her place.

BEATRICE.

But who then took my place?

THE ABBESS.

Why, no one took it, since you still were
there.

BEATRICE.

There, every day? I was among you all?
I moved, I spoke, you touched me with
your hands?

THE ABBESS.

As now, my child, I touch you with my
hand.

BEATRICE.

Mother, I know no more; except I think
I have no longer strength to understand.
I am still submissive, and I ask you naught.

I feel that all are very good : I feel
That death is very gentle.
Is it you
Who understand the soul is wretched—
you ?
There was no pardon here when here I
lived.
I have said often, when I was not happy,
God would not punish if He once knew all.
But you are happy, and have learned it all.
In other days all folk ignored distress,
In other days they cursed all those that
sinned ;
But now all pardon, and all seem to
know . . .
One of the angels, one would almost say,
Had spoken out the truth. Mother, and
you,
My Sister Eglantine, give me your hands—
You are not angry with me ? Tell them all,
My sisters . . . what is it they should be
told ?

My eyes no longer open, and my lips
Stiffen. . . . At last I fall asleep. I have
lived
In a world wherein I knew not what desired
Hate and ill-will, and in another world
I die, and understand not what desire,
Nor whereat aim mercy and love.

[*She falls back exhausted among the sheets. Silence.*

SISTER EGLANTINE.

She sleeps.

THE ABBESS.

Pray, pray, my sisters, till the triumphant
hour!

[*The* NUNS *fall on their knees around the bed of* BEATRICE.

THE END OF SISTER BEATRICE

ARDIANE AND BARBE BLEUE

OR,

THE USELESS DELIVERANCE

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ARDIANE
SELYSETTE
MELISANDE
YGRAINE
BELLANGERE
ALLADINE
A NURSE (foster-mother to ARDIANE)

BARBE BLEUE

Peasants, the Crowd.

ARDIANE AND BARBE BLEUE

ACT THE FIRST

A vast, resplendent hall, of semi-circular form, in the castle of BARBE BLEUE. *At the remoter end, in the centre of the semi-circular wall, is an enormous door; on either hand of this are three smaller doors, of ebony, with locks and ornaments of silver; each door is set within a niche, and all these niches are enclosed by a semi-circular colonnade of marble, the pillars of which support the balcony overhead. Above these doors, but set further back, are six great windows, to which the aforesaid balcony*

gives access; these may be gained from either side of the hall, by two flights of stairs, which follow the curve of the walls, and lead up to the semi-circular gallery.

It is evening; the great windows are open, and the candelabra lit. Without, below the windows, is an invisible, excited crowd, whose cries, now uneasy, now terrified, now threatening, together with the sound of sudden movements, the trampling of feet, and the murmur of persons speaking, are heard with great distinctness. During the first bars of the overture the curtain rises, and the voices of the hidden crowd are at once heard above the music.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

So . . . she was in the chariot? Did you see?

All the village lingered there,

There, to see her. . . . Is she fair?
She looked at me. . . . And me. . . .
And me.
O miserable child! . . . Yet all the while
She seemed to smile.
Whence hath she come? . . . From very
far away,
To know not . . . what awaits her here
to-day.
Their journey hath endured for thrice ten
days. . . .
He cannot see us . . . shout, that he
may know. . . .

[*All together.*

Back! Back! . . . Advance no nearer!
Never go
Up to the castle! . . . It is death, death,
death!

[*Isolated voices.*

She does not understand. . . . I hear they
say
No less than twenty men pursued her way,

That dwelt about her home. . . . You
wonder why?
Because they loved her. . . . Many used
to cry
Along the roads. . . . Why has she come,
O why?
They tell me that she knew. . . . He
shall not have her, no!
She is too fair for you! . . . He shall not
have her, no! . . .
O see them, see them, there they go!
Where are they going? . . . They are
coming through,
By the red gate. . . . It is not true . . .
I see their torches in the avenue!
There the great chariot goes between the
trees!
He is afraid. . . . He shall not have her,
no!
He is mad, mad, mad! He is mad! He
has done enough!
It is too much! . . . So she will be the
sixth!

O murderer, butcher! . . . Death to the
butcher, death!
Fire, fire! . . . Bring fire! . . . I have
brought my hay-fork, see!
And I my scythe! — They are entering
the yard . . .
Hey, let me see! . . . Take care! . . .
The gates are barred!
Wait for them here. . . . They say she
knows it all!
What does she know? . . . She knows
what I know too. . . .
What do you know? . . . I know they
all are dead!
Not dead, not dead? . . . I buried them
myself!
But I one evening once as I went by
Heard singing voices. . . . So did I. . . .
And I . . .
Ay, they come back, they say. . . . But he
Brings down misfortune on our heads. . . .
O see,

The windows! . . . They are closing of themselves!
Now . . . they are going in! They are going in. . . .
Nothing to see! . . . Death to him! Death! Death! Death!

[*And at this moment the six great windows above the interior balcony close of their own motion, stifling little by little the voices of the crowd. Soon nothing is heard but an indefinite murmur which is almost silence. Shortly afterwards* ARDIANE *and the* NURSE *enter by a side door.*

THE NURSE.

Where are we? . . . Listen! . . . Ah! . . . that muttering there!
It is the peasants: they were eager, yes,
To save us: yes, they ran along the roads,

But never dared to speak: they made us signs,
They made us signs that meant we should return. . . .

[*She goes forward to the great door at the end of the hall.*

They are here, behind this door! . . . I hear them: some
Tramp to and fro. . . . Now let us try to flee. . . .
He leaves us here alone: we can escape,
Perhaps. . . . I tell you plainly, he is mad!
O, it is death! For all they say is true,
He has killed five women. . . .

ARDIANE.

No, they are not dead . . .
Yonder I heard it spoken of at times,
In the far place whereto his savage love,
That yet was tremulous, came to seek me out,

As of a thing incomprehensible.
I was suspicious of the truth, and here
Am sure. He loves me: I am beautiful:
So shall I learn his secret. But ere all
We must be insubordinate. When the future
Is threatening to us and inscrutable
That is ere all our duty. For the rest,
They were mistaken; and if they are lost
They were lost by hesitation.
Here are we,
Within the outer hall whence opens out
The chamber where his love awaits me. Here
Are keys he gave me of the treasure-chests
Of bridal raiment, and the silver keys
Are ours to use: the golden is forbid.
That is the only one of import. These,
The six, I cast away: the last I keep.

[*She throws away the keys of silver, which tinkle and ring on the marble flags.*

THE NURSE (*who hastily picks them up again*).

What are you doing? He has given you
The treasures, all the treasures that they open!

ARDIANE.

Open them you, then, if it give you pleasure;
For me, I seek for the forbidden door.
Open the others if you will; but all
That is permitted us will tell us nought.

THE NURSE (*looking at the keys and then about the hall*).

The doors are yonder, set within the marble,
And we may know, since all have locks of silver,
They answer to the keys: but first of all,
Which one shall I unclose?

ARDIANE.

What matter which?
They are but there to turn aside our minds
From that we need to know. . . . I do not find,
Although I seek for it, the seventh door. . . .

THE NURSE (*trying the lock of the first door*).

Is this the key of the first? . . . Or this? . . . Or this?
Not yet, not yet. . . . Ay, but the third goes in,
Dragging my fingers after it! . . . Beware! . . .
Fly! . . . The two panels both have come to life!
They are gliding back like curtains! . . . What is this?

Beware, beware! . . . It is a hail of fire,
That beats upon my hands, that wounds
my face!
O!

[*The* NURSE *springs backward, for while she is speaking the two leaves of the door glide of their own motion into lateral recesses, and suddenly disappear, disclosing a vast heap of amethysts piled up to the top of the doorway. Then, as though delivered suddenly from centuries of constraint, countless gems and jewels of every size and form, but all of the one substance, amethyst — necklaces, bracelets, rings, aigrettes, buckles, girdles, collars, diadems — fall like a crumbling mass of violet flames, and rebound as far as the further side of the hall; and, while the first to fall spread themselves over the marble*

flags, others, more and more numerous and more and more resplendent, begin to fall from all the mouldings of the enchanted vaultings, and flow therefrom continually with an incessant sound of living jewels.

THE NURSE (*fascinated, bewildered, gathering up jewels with both her hands*).

Gather them up, O stoop, gather them up!
Take the most beautiful! Enough are here
To glorify a kingdom! Still they fall!
They pierce my hair, they stone my hands!
O look!
Unheard-of gems are raining from the vaults,
Miraculous violets, purple, lilac, mauve!
Plunge your arms into them and hide your face,
And I will fill my mantle full with them!

ARDIANE.

These amethysts are noble. Open now
The second door.

THE NURSE.

The second? I dare not! . . .
Yet I would know if . . .
[*She inserts the key in the lock of the second door.*
O, beware, beware!
The key already turns! And they have wings,
The doors: the walls too tear themselves asunder!
O!
[*The scene is the same as on the opening of the first door, but this time is seen the accumulated wealth, the rebounding irruption, the dazzling aud musical fall of a blue rain of sapphires.*

ARDIANE.

These are fine sapphires. Open now the third.

THE NURSE.

Wait, wait until I see that I have here
Indeed the most magnificent. My cloak
Will break beneath the weight of blue, blue sky!
O see them overflow! on every hand
They pour, pour, pour! — a violent torrent here,
And yonder in a stream of azure blue!

ARDIANE.

Come, come, Nurse, quickly, for the chance to sin
Is rare and fugitive. . . .

THE NURSE (*opens the third door, when the same thing befalls, save that this time follows the pale invasion, the milky*

rush, of a deluge of pearls, a shower less heavy, but more illimitable than those preceding).

I will but take
A handful of them, so they may caress
The sapphires.

ARDIANE.

Open now the fourth door.

THE NURSE (*opens the fourth door, when as before there is a shower of jewels, but this time of emeralds*).

O, these are greener than the Spring that runs
Along the poplars thick with drops of dew
That catch the lovely sunlight in my home!
[*Shaking her mantle, which overflows with amethysts, sapphires, and pearls.*
Away, away, ye others! give you place
For the most beautiful — for I was born

Under the boughs, and love the light of
leaves.

ARDIANE.

Open the fifth door.

THE NURSE.

O, not even these?
You do not love them?

ARDIANE.

What I love is fair
Beyond all fairness of miraculous gems.

THE NURSE (*opening the fifth door, to set free a blinding irruption, a living incandescence, a sinister deluge and cascade of rubies*).

O, these are terrible: I will not touch!

ARDIANE.

Now we approach the end: the threat lies
here.
Open the sixth.

THE NURSE.

It is the last key.

ARDIANE.

Open it quickly.

[*The* NURSE, *hesitating, opens the sixth door. All passes as before: but the radiance is this time intolerable. Cataracts of enormous diamonds of the first water pour into the hall; myriads of sparks, flashes, flecks of fire, and prismatic rays mingle, are extinguished, blaze forth again and multiply, outspreading as they fall.* ARDIANE, *startled, gives a dazed cry. She stoops, picks up a diadem, a necklace, and handfuls of the glistening splendour, and therewith she decks at random her hair, her arms, her throat, her hands. Then, flashing before her*

eyes and raising before her face diamonds that shed a brilliance upon her.

O, my flashing diamonds!
For you I never sought, but on my way
I greet you! O immortal dew of light!
Stream o'er my hands, illuminate my arms,
Dazzle my very flesh! O, you are pure,
And you are tireless, and you never die:
And that which in your fires eternally
Trembles, like to a populace of spirits,
That have constrained and wear the stars of Heaven,
It is the passion of that Radiance
Which, penetrating all things, knows no rest,
And finds no more to conquer, save itself!

[*She approaches the door, and looks up at the vaulted arch.*

Rain on, O supreme heart of summer, rain!
O shards of light, O limitless soul of flame!

Yea, wound my eyes, yet shall you never
tire
Those eyes of gazing!
[*Leaning yet further back.*
O, what is it there?
O Nurse, where are you? For the splen-
did rain
Hangs motionless, suspended in a bow,
A diamond rainbow of prismatic fire! . . .
O see the seventh door, with golden bars,
With golden lock and hinges!

THE NURSE.

Come away!
No, never touch it! No, withdraw your
hands!
Withdraw your eyes, lest of itself it
open!
Come, let us hide! These diamonds —
after them
Or fire will come, or death!

ARDIANE.

Go back, go back!
Hide you yourself behind a marble shaft:
I will alone go forward.

[*She steps into the recess under the vaulted doorway, and inserts the key in the lock. The door divides into two panels, and disappears: nothing is visible save an opening full of darkness: but the sound of singing, muffled and remote, rises from the depths of the earth, and spreads through the hall.*

THE NURSE.

Ardiane!
What are you doing? Is it you that sings?

ARDIANE.

Listen!

THE DISTANT VOICES.

Orlamonde's five daughters,
When the faery died,
Orlamonde's five daughters
Sought to win outside.

THE NURSE.

They are . . . the other women!

ARDIANE.

Yes.

THE NURSE.

O, shut the door! Their singing fills the hall:
It will be heard, heard everywhere!

ARDIANE (*trying to close the door*).

I cannot!

THE DISTANT VOICES.

They lit their five lanterns,
  Through all the towers they sought,
And in four hundred chambers;
  The day, they found it not.

THE NURSE.

Now it is louder, always louder! Come!
Come, let us close — help me — the outer
  door. . . .
  [*They try to close the door that concealed
    the diamonds.*
This too resists! We cannot shut them in!

THE DISTANT VOICES.

Then they found an echoing deep,
  And let it them enfold:
And upon a stubborn door
  Found a key of gold.

THE NURSE (*bewildered, and also entering the recess*).

Be silent, silent! . . . We shall all be lost!
Stifle that voice! [*Stretching out her mantle.*
The doorway — ah, my cloak
Will cover it. . . .

ARDIANE.

I see beyond the sill
Steps. I am going down to where they sing.

THE DISTANT VOICES (*always louder*).

Through the chinks they see the ocean:
Ah, they fear to die!
They strike the door they dare not open,
And the hours go by.
[*At the last words of the song* BARBE BLEUE *enters the hall. For a moment he stops short, gazing; then he draws near to the women.*

BARBE BLEUE.

You too!

ARDIANE (*who starts, leaves the doorway, and advances, glittering with diamonds, towards* BARBE BLEUE).

I above all.

BARBE BLEUE.

I thought that you
Were stronger, wiser than your sisters were.

ARDIANE.

How long did they avoid the thing forbid?

BARBE BLEUE.

This, for some days; that, a few months; and one,
The last of all, a year.

ARDIANE.

It was the last,
Only the last, that there was need to punish.

BARBE BLEUE.

It was a very little thing to ask.

ARDIANE.

You asked of these more than you ever gave.

BARBE BLEUE.

The happiness I willed for you you lose.

ARDIANE.

The happiness I would lives not in darkness.
When I know all to pardon will be mine.

BARBE BLEUE (*seizing* ARDIANE *by the arm*).

Come! Come!

ARDIANE.

Where would you, then, that I should go?

BARBE BLEUE.

Where I shall lead you.

ARDIANE.

No.

[BARBE BLEUE *strives to drag her away by force. She gives a long cry of pain. This cry is answered at first by a low murmur from without. The struggle between the two continues for a few moments, and the* NURSE *gives vent to despairing outcries. Suddenly a stone, hurled from without, shatters one of the windows, and the crowd is heard, excited and enraged. Other stones fall; the* NURSE, *running to the great door at the end of the hall, raises*

the bars and shoots the bolts. A sudden rush from outside splinters the door and forces it in; and the peasants, infuriated but hesitating, crowd upon the threshold. BARBE BLEUE, *releasing* ARDIANE, *draws his sword and prepares for the onset. But* ARDIANE, *tranquil, advances towards the crowd.*

ARDIANE.

What would you? He has not done me any ill.

[*She gently disperses the peasants, and carefully closes the door, while* BARBE BLEUE, *with lowered eyes, gazes at the point of his sword.*

CURTAIN.

ACT THE SECOND

At the rising of the curtain the scene is a vast subterranean hall, with a vaulted roof supported by many columns; it is plunged in almost total darkness. From the extreme right, almost in the wings, there runs back a narrow, winding subterranean passage, also with a vaulted roof; it debouches into the great hall towards the front of the stage by a roughly-arched opening.

At the further end of this passage ARDIANE *and the* NURSE *are seen, descending the last few steps of a stairway;* ARDIANE *carries a lamp.*

THE NURSE.

Hush! Do you hear? He shuts the iron door.

Over our heads! Why would you not give way?
We never shall behold the day again.

ARDIANE.

Fear not; he is wounded, he is overcome;
But knows it not as yet. With supplication
He will re-open it: but let us seek
First if we cannot of ourselves win free.
Meanwhile his wrath all that his love refused
Has granted: we shall find what here is hid.

[*She advances, holding the lamp high above her head, to the mouth of the passage, and there bends forward, seeking to penetrate the darkness of the hall. At the first ray of light which pierces the obscurity is heard the sound of hushed*

and fearful flight. ARDIANE *turns towards the* NURSE *to call her.*

ARDIANE.

Come! They are here!

[*She enters the hall, which the lamp illuminates pillar by pillar.*

Where are you?

[*A terrified moan replies.* ARDIANE *directs the rays of her lamp toward the part from which it seems to proceed, and perceives the forms of five women, motionless with fright, who are huddled together in the shadows of the remotest pillars.*

ARDIANE (*in a muffled voice, still half fearful*).

They are there!

Nurse, nurse, where are you?

[*The* NURSE *hastens toward* ARDIANE: ARDIANE *gives her the lamp, and*

takes a few hesitating steps toward the five.

Sisters, O my sisters!

[*The five start.*

They live! They live! They live!
Behold me here!

[*She runs to them with open arms, clasps them with hesitating hands, strains them to her breast, and kisses them and caresses them, feeling about her with uncertain gestures, in a kind of impassioned and convulsive tenderness, while the* NURSE, *lamp in hand, stands still a little apart.*

ARDIANE.

O, I have found you! . . . They are full
of life,
They are full of sweetness! . . . When I
saw the hall
Open in darkness from the passage end,

I thought to find . . . ah me! . . . dead
bodies here. . . .
And lo . . . I kiss these loveliest lips in
tears!
Have you not suffered? O, your lips
how fresh,
Your cheeks how like the cheeks of
children! See,
Your naked arms are supple, ay, and
warm;
Your round round breasts are throbbing
through their veils!
Why do you tremble? . . . O, how many
you are!
Now I clasp shoulders; now my arms
entwine
Hips, and my touch on whom I know
not rests. . . .
On every hand my lips meet lips, my
breast meets breasts.
O this that bathes you all, this hair!
You must be fair, so fair!

Waves, faintly warm, are parted by my hands,
My arms are lost amid rebellious strands. . . .
Have you a thousand tresses? . . . and are they
Like night, or like the day?
I see no longer what I do,
But I am kissing, kissing all of you,
And one by one I gather all your hands!
It is the least of you I find the last:
O never tremble! See, I hold you fast,
My arms enfold you close to me!
Nurse, nurse, what are you doing there?
Behold me like a mother here,
Feeling in darkness, and my children . . . they
Await the dawn to clear.

[*The* NURSE *draws near, bearing the lamp, and its light falls on the group of women. The captives are then seen to be clad in rags,*

their hair in disorder, their faces emaciated and their eyes dazzled and alarmed. ARDIANE, *for a moment astonished, takes the lamp from the* NURSE, *in order the better to light them, and to regard them more closely.*

ARDIANE.

O, you have suffered here!
And O, how gloomy does your prison seem!
Great clammy drops are falling on my hands,
And my lamp's flame is flickering all the while!
How strange your eyes are when you look at me!
And you draw back as I approach — but why?
What, are you still afraid?
And who is that who seeks to fly?

Is it not she, the youngest of you all,
She that I kissed but now?
O, has my long long sister's kiss
Done to you any harm?
Come to me, come then! Do you fear
the light?
Tell me, what is her name?

TWO OR THREE TIMID VOICES.

Selysette.

ARDIANE.

Selysette — a smile?
It is the first that I have seen this while!
Your wide eyes falter as though they saw
the Dead,
Although in truth they look on life
instead:
And O, these delicate bare arms that
tremble,
Both waiting to be loved! Come, my
arms too

Are waiting, though I tremble not as you!
[*Embracing her.*
You have been in this tomb how many days?

SELYSETTE.

We count the days but ill here, oftentimes
Deceive ourselves, but none the less I think
I have been here for upwards of a year.
[YGRAINE *advances: she is paler than the others.*

ARDIANE.

It is a long while since you saw the light!

YGRAINE.

I used not to unclose my eyes; I wept
So long alone.

SELYSETTE (*looking fixedly at* ARDIANE).

How beautiful you are!
How could he bring himself to punish you

As he used us? You also in the end
Have disobeyed him?

ARDIANE.

No, it was not so!
No, I obeyed more swiftly than the rest,
But other laws than his.

SELYSETTE.

Why have you come?
O why have you come here?

ARDIANE.

To set you free.

SELYSETTE.

How should we be set free?

ARDIANE.

But follow me:
No more than that. . . . What used you
here to do?

SELYSETTE.

We prayed, sang, wept, and then we waited
always.

ARDIANE.

You never sought escape?

SELYSETTE.

We could not flee,
For all the ways are shut, and flight forbid.

ARDIANE.

That we shall see. . . . But she that looks
at me
Between the tangles of her fallen hair
That seems to wrap her round in frozen
flame —
What is her name?

SELYSETTE.

Her name is Melisande.

ARDIANE.

Come hither, Melisande! And she whose
eyes,
Wide, eager eyes, are following my lamp?

SELYSETTE.

Bellangere.

ARDIANE.

And that other, who is hid
Behind the heavy pillar?

SELYSETTE.

She has come
From very far away, poor Alladine!

ARDIANE.

Why do you call her poor?

SELYSETTE.

Because she came
Last of us all, and speaks another tongue.

ARDIANE (*holding out her arms to* ALLADINE).

Come, Alladine! . . . You see that I
speak hers,
When I embrace her thus.

SELYSETTE.

She has not yet
Ever ceased weeping.

ARDIANE (*looking at* SELYSETTE *and the others with astonishment*).

Why, but you yourself,
Can you not laugh yet — laugh and clap
your hands?
And all the rest are silent! What is this?
What are you? Will you live in terror thus
Always? I do not see you smile at all,
While with your eyes — incredulous eyes!
— you watch
My every gesture. Will you not believe
The joyful news? O, do you not regret

The light of day, the birds among the boughs,
The high green gardens blowing overhead?
Do you not know the world is in the Spring?
I yester-morning, wandering by the way,
Drank in the light, the sense of space of dawn,
So many flowers beneath my every step,
I knew not where to set my careless feet!
Have you forgot the sunlight and the dew,
Dew in the leaves, and laughter of the sea?
The sea but now was laughing as it laughs
On days whereon it knows the wind of joy,
And all its thousand ripples approved my feet,
Its ripples singing on the sands of light. . . .

[*At this moment one of the drops of water which drip incessantly from the roof falls upon the flame of the lamp which* ARDIANE *holds before her, as she turns towards the*

mouth of the subterranean passage, and the light flickers and is extinguished. The NURSE *gives a cry of terror, and* ARDIANE *stops, dismayed.*

ARDIANE (*in the darkness*).

O, but where are you?

SELYSETTE.

Hither: take my hand.
Stay by me: water, stagnant and profound,
Lies yonder.

ARDIANE.

What, and you can see it still?

SELYSETTE.

Yes, we have lived so long in darkness here.

BELLANGERE.

Come hither: it is lighter here by far.

SELYSETTE.

Yes, let us all go thither to the light.

ARDIANE.

Then is there in this deepest darkness
light?

SELYSETTE.

Yes, there is light. Do you not see it there,
A wide, pale glow illumining the depth
Beyond the further arches?

ARDIANE.

Where?

SELYSETTE.

O blind!
O, let me kiss you. . . .

ARDIANE.

Yes, there is indeed
A faint light, growing wider. . . .

SELYSETTE.

O no, no!
It is your eyes, your lovely astonished eyes
That widen!

ARDIANE.

O, whence is it?

MELISANDE.

We do not know.

ARDIANE.

But we must know!
[*She goes toward the back of the scene, and moves to and fro, feeling along the wall with her hands.*
Here is the wall . . . and here . . .
But higher . . . here . . . it is no longer stone!
Help me to mount upon this mass of rock!
[*She climbs, supported by the others.*
Here it is like an altar. Here the roof

Is moulded in a pointed arch. . . . And here —
O, O, enormous bolts and iron bars!
You have sought to push them? Have you?

SELYSETTE.

Never! No!
No, never touch them: for they say the sea
Washes the walls — great waves will tumble in!
It is the sea that makes it glimmer green!

YGRAINE.

We have so often heard it: have a care!

MELISANDE.

O, I see water tremble above our heads!

ARDIANE.

No, no, it is the light that seeks you out!

BELLANGERE.

She is trying to force it open!

[*The terrified women recoil, and take refuge behind a great column, whence they follow with widened eyes* ARDIANE'S *every movement.*

ARDIANE.

My poor sisters!
Why, if you love your darkness, do you seek
Deliverance from any quarter? Why,
If you were happy, did you use to weep?
O, the bars rise! They rise! And now the doors
Are going to open! Wait!

[*And indeed the heavy panels of a sort of great interior shutter are seen, while yet she is speaking, to open, but as yet only a very faint, diffused, and sombre light illuminates*

the round aperture perceived under the vaulted ceiling.

ARDIANE (*continuing her search*).

No light as yet,
No real light! But now I pass
My hands across. . . . What is it? Glass?
Or maybe marble. . . . One would say
This were a window, sealed away,
Blackened with pitch. . . . My nails are
broken! Nay,
Where are your distaffs? Melisande,
Selysette, give me in my hand
A distaff: nay, a stone,
A single pebble of the thousands strown
Over the floor. . . .

[SELYSETTE *runs to* ARDIANE, *holding up to her a stone, which she takes.*

Behold before your eyes
The key of your sunrise!

[*She strikes a violent blow upon the glass. One of the square panes is*

shattered into fragments, and a great dazzling star seems to burst forth in the darkness. The women give a cry of almost delighted terror, and ARDIANE, *now beside herself, and wholly submerged in a more and more intolerable radiance, breaks all the remaining panes with heavy, hurried blows, in a kind of ecstatic delirium.*

Yet another pane!
Now, and now again!
Till they fall, great and small, shattered,
down to the last of all!
All the panes in ruin crack,
And O the flames are driving back
My hands, my hair!
I can see nothing now of what is there!
Nor do I longer dare
To raise my lids, for now it seems
They are mad with fury, the dazzling
beams!

Ardiane and Barbe Bleue

Stir not from where you were!
I can no longer stand upright,
But shut my eyes behold the sight
Of bright long strings of pearls, my eyelids lashing!
I know not what assails me, o'er me dashing:
Is it the skies or else the seas,
Is it the light or else the breeze?
All my tresses bright have grown a torrent of light,
And miracle all over me is flashing!
I see no longer, but I hear
A myriad rays of light beating on either ear!
But how to hide my eyes I do not know,
For no shade now my two hands throw;
My eyelids dazzle me; my arms, that try
To cover them, do cover, but with light!
Where are you? Hither, all of you! for I
Am helpless to descend; I cannot see aright;

I see not, know not, where to press
My feet amid the surf of fire that sway my
dress!
Come hither, hither all, or I shall fall
Into your darkness!

[*At this cry* SELYSETTE *and* MELISANDE *leave the shadows wherein they had taken refuge, and run to the window, their hands pressed upon their eyes, as though to pass through flame; and thus, groping in the light, they mount beside* ARDIANE *on the mass of rock. The others follow them, and do as they; and thus all crowd together in the stream of blinding radiance, which forces them to lower their heads. Then passes a moment of dazzled silence, during which is heard the murmur of the sea without, the caress of the wind among grasses, the song of*

birds, and the bells of a flock of sheep going by in a distant pasture.

SELYSETTE.

I can hear the sea!

MELISANDE.

And I can see the sky. . . .

[*Covering her eyes with the bend of her arm.*

One cannot look!

ARDIANE.

My eyes are growing calmer 'neath my hands.
Where are we?

BELLANGERE.

Trees are all that I would see.
Where are they?

YGRAINE.

O, but how the world is green!

ARDIANE.

We are midway upon the cliff-side here.

MELISANDE.

Down there — the village! Do you see
the village?

BELLANGERE.

We cannot reach the village: all around
Is water, and the bridges all up-drawn.

SELYSETTE.

Where are there people?

MELISANDE.

There is a peasant there —
Yonder.

SELYSETTE.

He saw — is looking at us now.
See, I will make a sign to him. . . .
[*She waves her long hair.*
He saw!

He saw my hair, he takes his bonnet off!
He makes the sign of the Cross!

MELISANDE.

A bell, a bell! [*Counting the strokes.*
Seven, eight, nine!

BELLANGERE.

Ten . . . and eleven . . . twelve!

MELISANDE.

So it is noon. . . .

YGRAINE.

Who is it singing so?

MELISANDE.

Why, those are birds! Do you see them?
There they are!
There are thousands in the lofty poplar trees
That grow along the river.

SELYSETTE.

Alladine!
Where is she, O where is she, Alladine?
For I would kiss her.

MELISANDE.

Alladine is here,
And I, I kiss her.

SELYSETTE.

You — O Melisande,
You are so pale!

MELISANDE.

You also, you are pale!
No, do not look at me!

SELYSETTE.

And see, your dress
Is all in tatters: I can see you through
it. . . .

MELISANDE.

And yours; for your uncovered breasts appear,
Parting your tresses. . . . Do not look at me.

BELLANGERE.

How long our tresses are!

YGRAINE.

How pale our cheeks!

BELLANGERE.

The sun shines through our hands. . . .

MELISANDE.

O, Alladine!
She is sobbing!

SELYSETTE.

I am kissing, kissing her. . . .

ARDIANE.

Ah yes, kiss one another: do not yet
Look in each other's faces: more than all
You shall not think that light will make you sad.
You shall by your intoxication profit
To issue from the tomb. Here steps of stone
Descend the cliff-side. Though I do not know
Whither they lead, yet they are full of light,
And the free winds of heaven assail them. Come!
Follow me all! A thousand thousand rays
Are dancing, dancing on the crests of the sea!

[*She goes out through the opening and disappears in the light without.*

SELYSETTE (*who follows, drawing the others after her*).

Come, yes, O come, my poor, my happy sisters!
Let us too dance, dance, dance the dance of the light!

[*They all climb the great stone and disappear, singing in the brilliance of outer day.*

THE RECEDING VOICES.

Orlamonde's five daughters
(The faery's days were o'er),
Orlamonde's five daughters
Found at last the door.

CURTAIN.

ACT THE THIRD

The curtain rises on the same scene as in the First Act. The scattered jewels are still glistening in the niches, and on the marble floor. Between the pillars of the semi-circular colonnade are open coffers, overflowing with costly raiment. It is now night without, and under the hanging candelabra, the tapers of which are lit, ALLADINE, SELYSETTE, MELISANDE, YGRAINE *and* BELLANGERE *are standing before the great mirrors, and each is giving the touches of completion to the dressing of her hair, or adjusting the folds of her glittering attire, or decking herself with jewels and flowers, while* ARDIANE, *passing from one to*

the other, assists and advises them all. The great windows are open.

SELYSETTE.

Though from the spell-bound castle we as yet
Discover no escape, yet wherefore fear,
Since he is here no longer?
[*Embracing* ARDIANE.
We are happy,
And still, because you tarry with us, free.

MELISANDE.

Where has he gone?

ARDIANE.

I know no more than you.
Yet gone he has. It may be he is troubled:
It may be for the first time disconcerted.
It well may be the anger of the peasants
Left him uneasy; he has felt their hate
Brim over: who shall say he has not gone

To search out guards or soldiers to chastise
The mutinous, and so return a master?

MELISANDE.

You will not go away?

ARDIANE.

How should I go,
When all the castle moats are brimming full,
When all the drawbridges are hoisted high,
When all the doors and gates are locked and barred,
When all the walls are inaccessible?
Though none are seen to guard them, none the less
The doors are not abandoned; all our steps
Are closely spied; he must have given out
Mysterious orders. But on every side
The peasants wait and watch upon the roads.
Meanwhile, my sisters, the eventful hour

Draws nigh; we must be very beautiful.
But is it so that you prepare yourselves?
Your hair was full of miracle, Melisande!
Below, it lit the darkness of the vaults,
Steadfast it smiled upon the night of the tomb,
And now you have extinguished every flame!
Again I come to liberate the light!

[*She removes* MELISANDE'S *veil, cuts with her scissors the fillets that constrain her tresses, and all her hair suddenly flows downwards, streaming resplendent over her shoulders.*

YGRAINE (*turning about to look at* MELISANDE).

O!

SELYSETTE (*also turning*).

I can hardly think it still is she!
She is so beautiful!

ARDIANE.

And you, and you!
Those loveliest arms, where are they,
Selysette?
What have you done?

SELYSETTE.

Within my silver sleeves,
Here are my arms.

ARDIANE.

I cannot see them, no,
Not as I saw them but a while ago,
Saw those arms I worshipped so,
The while I watched you, saw you dress,
Every strand and every tress;
They seemed as they were raised above
Your head to reach, to appeal for love.
My loving eyes caressed your every
gesture:
I turned about, and when I turn again

I see their shadow merely through their vesture
That shone but now so bright. But now these twain
Twin rays of happiness I liberate!
[*She detaches the sleeves.*

SELYSETTE.

My poor bare arms! O, they will shake with cold!

ARDIANE.

No, for they are too beautiful! And you,
[*Turning to* YGRAINE.
Ygraine, where are you? For there shone but now,
Deep in this mirror, shoulders, and a throat,
That flooded it with happy, tender light:
Come, I must liberate you all! My sisters,
In truth I do not wonder any more
He never loved you as he should have loved,

Or that he coveted a hundred, yet
Possessed no woman.

[*Removing the mantle that* YGRAINE *has thrown over her shoulders.*

O two fountain-heads
Of beauty into darkness cast away!
This above all: fear nothing! And to-night
Let us be beautiful!

[*The* NURSE, *haggard and dishevelled, enters by a side door.*

THE NURSE.

O, he is here!
He is returning!

THE OTHERS.

Who? Who? He? To-night?

ARDIANE.

Who told you?

SELYSETTE.

Were you able to go out?

ARDIANE.

Have you seen any one?

THE NURSE.

Yes, yes, a guard!
He has seen you, he admires you!

ARDIANE.

I have seen
No creature since the hour he went away.
All gates, all doors of their own motion close,
Though none knows how; the palace seems deserted.

THE NURSE.

They hide, I say they hide,
And we are all espied
Forever here.
It was the youngest spoke to me;
He is returning; he must be,
He said, quite near.

The peasants are in arms. The peasants know!
They are rising! All the village is below,
Lurking among the hedges! Hark! A cry!

[*She mounts by one of the curving lateral stairways to the windows of the gallery.*

There are torches in the copses going by!

[*The women, terrified, give a cry of horror, and run to and fro through the hall, seeking a point of exit. The* NURSE *endeavours to stop them.*

THE NURSE.

Seek not to fly: you know the doors are shut.
Where would you go? Stay here, stay here, and wait!

SELYSETTE (*also mounting to the windows*).

O, the great chariot! It is stopping!

[*All mount the stairs to the windows, crowding together on the interior balcony, and leaning out into the night.*

MELISANDE.

See!
Now he steps out! I see him! And he makes
Signs, signs of anger!

SELYSETTE.

All around him stand
His negroes!

MELISANDE.

And they all have naked swords
That glitter in the moon!

SELYSETTE (*taking refuge in* ARDIANE'S *arms*).

O Ardiane!
O Ardiane, I am frightened!

THE NURSE.

Do you see?
The peasants are appearing! There they come!
See, there again! And O, they have their scythes,
Their pitch-forks!

SELYSETTE.

They are going to fight!
[*Murmurs, cries, uproar, tumult, blasphemy, and the clashing of arms in the distance without.*

MELISANDE.

They fight!

YGRAINE.

One of the negroes there has fallen!

THE NURSE.

O,
The peasants, they are terrible! Their scythes!
They are so huge! And all the village there!

MELISANDE.

O look, the negroes are deserting him!
They fly, they fly! They are hiding in the woods!

YGRAINE.

And he is flying also! Now he runs!
Now he is making for the castle court!

THE NURSE.

The peasants after him!

SELYSETTE.

O, they will kill him!

THE NURSE.

They are going out to help him! See the guards!
They have opened wide the castle gates! They run!
They run to help him!

SELYSETTE.

One, two, three, four, five . . .
Now six . . . now seven. . . . There are only seven!

THE NURSE.

O look, the peasants are surrounding them!
They are there in hundreds!

MELISANDE.

O, what are they doing?

THE NURSE.

I see them dancing round about a man:
The rest have fallen!

SELYSETTE.

And the man is he!
I caught a sight of his blue mantle then:
He is lying on the grass!

THE NURSE.

Now they are still!
Now they are raising him!

MELISANDE.

O, is he hurt?

YGRAINE.

He staggers!

SELYSETTE.

He is bleeding! I saw blood!
Ardiane!

ARDIANE.

Come away then, look no more!
Hide your head here in my arms!

THE NURSE.

They are bringing ropes!
They are disputing! Now they tie his limbs!

MELISANDE.

Where are they going? For they carry him. . . .
They are dancing, they are singing!

THE NURSE.

Hither, see!
They are coming hither: see them on the bridge!
The gates are open. They are halting. O,
They mean to cast him in the moat!

ARDIANE AND THE OTHERS (*terrified, crying aloud, and rocking to and fro in desperation at the windows*).

No, no!
Help, help him! Do not kill him! Help him, help!
No, no, not that! Not that! Not that! Not that!

THE NURSE.

They do not hear. . . . The others thrust them on. . . .

ARDIANE.

He is saved!

THE NURSE.

And now they are before the gate,
And now they seek to break into the yard!
[*Cries from the* CROWD, *who have caught sight of the women at the windows. They then sing.*

THE CROWD.

Open! Open! Open! Open the door!

Open wide the door!
Open in God's name!
The candle gutters o'er,
The wick has no more flame!

THE WOMEN.

We cannot! . . . It is barred! . . . They break it in!
Hear it give way! They all are coming in!
And now they struggle up the flight of steps
Before the door below. . . . Beware! Beware!
They are all drunken!

ARDIANE.

I am going now
To unbar the door below. . . .

THE OTHERS.

O Ardiane! [*Terrified and imploring.*
No! They are drunken! Bolt it, Ardiane!
They are at the door!

ARDIANE.

Fear nothing: stay you there.
Do not come down, for I will go alone.

[*The five women descend the stairs which lead down from the windows, and recoil towards the nearer end of the hall, and there remain, grouped rigidly together in an attitude of terrified attention.* ARDIANE, *followed by the* NURSE, *goes to the great central door, under the colonnade, and throws back both leaves of it. There is a sound of trampling feet, of shouting, singing, and laughter. The foremost members of the crowd*

appear, amid the red glare of the torches, as it were framed in the doorway, which they entirely fill, but without crossing the threshold. They are folk of brutal appearance, savage or hilarious according to disposition; their clothes are torn and disordered after their struggle. They are carrying BARBE BLEUE, *who is tightly pinioned, and pause for a moment, disconcerted at the appearance of* ARDIANE, *who is standing before the grave, unperturbed, and imperial. At the same time, further back among those peasants who are crowded together on the flight of steps, and cannot see what is passing, there are cries, sudden thrusts and pushes, shouts, and laughter that lasts a moment and is then extinguished by the per-*

plexed and respectful whisperings of those about the door. At the moment of the invasion of the doorway by the crowd, the five women silently and instinctively fall on their knees at the end of the hall remoter from the door.

AN OLD PEASANT (*removing his bonnet and rolling it in his hands*).

Well, lady, can a man come in?

ONE OF THOSE THAT CARRY BARBE BLEUE.

You see,
He 'll do you no more ill!

A THIRD PEASANT.

He 's heavy. . . . Ouf!

THE FIRST PEASANT.

Where would you have us put him?

ANOTHER PEASANT.

Over there
Down in the corner.
[*They lay* BARBE BLEUE *down.*
There now, there he lies
Now he will never stir again! No more!
Much evil has he done us!

ANOTHER PEASANT.

Have you got
Somewhat to kill him with?

ARDIANE.

Yes, never fear. . . .

THE PEASANT.

Will you have some one help you?

ARDIANE.

No, no need. . . .
We shall do well.

A Peasant.

But look you have a care:
Beware lest he escape you!
[*Baring his chest.*
See you now,
What he has done to me!

Another Peasant (*baring his arm*).

Now see my arm!
It came in here, and then out there it went.

Ardiane.

You are all brave folk, but do you leave us now.
We shall avenge ourselves, and well; but now
Leave us, I pray, for night is growing late,
And see to all your wounds.

The Old Peasant.

Now show respect,
Because we are not savages, to ladies.

We shall not make a sound. . . . It is not, lady,
Words, merely — but you are too beautiful.
Good-bye, good-bye.

ARDIANE (*closing the door*).

Good-bye; you have my thanks.
[*She turns and sees the five women on their knees at the other end of the hall.*
You were on your knees!
[*Approaching* BARBE BLEUE.
And you are wounded? Yes!
The blood is flowing here — 't is in the neck —
'T is nothing; no, the wound is shallow. This,
Here on the arm — but hurts upon the arm
Are seldom very grave — but as for this —

The bleeding will not stop: the hand is pierced.
First we must dress it.

[*While* ARDIANE *is speaking the five women draw nigh, one by one, and without speaking kneel or lean about* BARBE BLEUE.

SELYSETTE.

His eyes are open now.

MELISANDE.

How pale he is! He must have suffered!

SELYSETTE.

O!
Those peasants are so terrible!

ARDIANE.

Some water!

THE NURSE.

Yes, I will go and seek some. . . .

ARDIANE.

Have you linen?

MELISANDE.

Here is my kerchief.

SELYSETTE.

He is stifling! O,
Would you not have me hold his head up?

MELISANDE.

Stay,
See, I will help you.

SELYSETTE.

No, for Alladine
Is helping me.

[ALLADINE *indeed is helping her to raise* BARBE BLEUE'S *head, and she furtively kisses his forehead, sobbing the while.*

MELISANDE.

O softly, Alladine!
What are you doing?

SELYSETTE.

How his forehead burns!

MELISANDE.

His beard is shaven, and he is not now
So terrible. . . .

SELYSETTE.

Have you not some water? See,
His face is covered all with dust and blood.

YGRAINE.

He breathes with effort. . . .

ARDIANE.

Yes, it is these cords,
They stifle him. The bonds are drawn so tight

A rock would crumble in them. . . . Have you not,
Some one, a knife?

YGRAINE.

Two knives were on the table. . . .
Here is the larger.

[*She gives it to* ARDIANE.

THE NURSE (*who has returned with the water — terrified*).

You are going to . . .

ARDIANE.

Yes.

THE NURSE.

But he is not — you see . . . he looks at us!

ARDIANE.

Raise well the cord, so I may do no hurt. . . .

[*One by one she cuts the bonds which imprison* BARBE BLEUE. *When she comes to those that pinion his arms behind his back the* NURSE *seizes her hands to check her.*

THE NURSE.

Wait till he speaks . . . we do not know
at all. . . .

ARDIANE.

Have you another knife? This blade is
broken. . . .
The cords are very hard.

MELISANDE (*giving her the knife*).

Here is the other.

ARDIANE.

Thank you!

[*She cuts the last turns of the cord. Silence: the beating of their hearts is heard.* BARBE BLEUE, *feeling*

himself free, rises slowly to a sitting posture, his arms still benumbed, and moves his hands to make them supple. He then regards each of the women about him fixedly, and in silence. Then, leaning against the wall, he stands upright and remains motionless, looking at his injured hand.

ARDIANE (*drawing near to him*).

Good-bye.

[*She kisses him upon the brow.* BARBE BLEUE *makes an instinctive movement to detain her. She gently frees herself, and proceeds toward the door, followed by the* NURSE.

SELYSETTE (*running after her and stopping her*).

Ardiane, Ardiane!
Where are you going?

ARDIANE.

Far away from here,
Down yonder, where I am awaited still. . . .
Do you come with me, Selysette?

SELYSETTE.

I too?
But when will you return?

ARDIANE.

I shall not.

MELISANDE.

O!
Ardiane!

ARDIANE.

Are you coming, Melisande?
[MELISANDE *looks to and fro from* ARDIANE *to* BARBE BLEUE *and does not reply.*

O see the open door, the far blue hills!
Ygraine, are you not coming?

[YGRAINE *does not turn her head.*

Now the moon,
The stars, illumine every road. And you,
Bellangere, do you come?

BELLANGERE (*shortly*).

No. . . .

ARDIANE.

Alladine,
Do I go forth alone?

[*At these words* ALLADINE *runs to* ARDIANE, *throws herself into her arms, sobbing convulsively, and holds her in a long and feverish embrace.*

ARDIANE (*embracing her in turn, and softly disengaging herself, in tears*).

You too remain,
Alladine! O be happy! And farewell. . . .

[*She goes out hastily, followed by the* NURSE. *The five women look at*

one another and at BARBE BLEUE, *who slowly raises his head.* BELLANGERE *and* YGRAINE *shrug their shoulders, and go to close the door. Silence.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

THE END OF ARDIANE AND BARBE BLEUE.